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# CHRISTIANITY

*K* NO

Creature of the State :

Or, if it be made One,

## REASONS,

Why it should be Abolish'd.

Humbly offer'd to the Consideration of our

## STATES-MEN.

In a LETTER to a Friend.

*Probitas laudatur & alget.*

By the Author of the CASE of the PROTESTANT  
DISSENTERS fairly Stated.

L O N D O N :

Printed for R. FORD, at the *Angel* in the *Poultry* ; and Sold  
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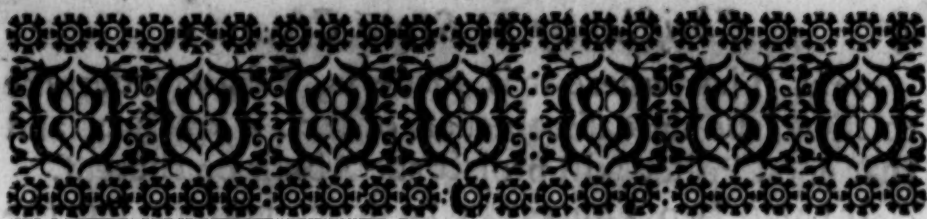
In a LETTER to a Friend.

Written by James C. Smith.

By the Author of the CASE of the PROTESTANT  
DISSENTERS lately &c.

LONDON:

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# CHRISTIANITY

N O

## STATE Creature.

SIR,

**T**IS to me a melancholy Reflection, that Christianity should be made to carry so many Faces, so many different Shapes, as bear Proportion to the various Humours, Interests, and Caprices of its Professors. The Consequence of this is, that tho' every Party may talk of it as something most Sacred, yet they make it subserve the basest Designs, by which means it is expos'd to the ridicule and contempt of *Deists* and *Atheists*. To rescue it from this unhappy Circumstance, *Hic labor, hoc opus est*, especially when Virtue and Probity are become Strangers to the greatest Part of such, who set up for their Advocates and Defenders.

However this shall not discourage me, in my Design, and tho' the Success may be little, yet I hope I shall provoke some Men, of more Leisure; and greater Abilities to engage in an Argument so very profitable and important. There are two Things which I will here attempt to make evident. The first is, That Christianity, as instituted by our Saviour, was never design'd for a State-Creature.



4 *Christianity no State Creature.*

2dly. That where it is made so, I shall undertake to shew the unreasonableness of such a Practice, and that good Policy will project the Abolition thereof.

If these two Things can be done, nothing but the Pride, Ambition, and Covetousness of a certain Body of Reverends, and their Adherents, can stand in the way of a glorious Reformation.

It will be here necessary, that I explain more clearly what I mean by Christianity's being a State Creature, of which 'tis no difficult Matter to form a distinct Idea; by its being a State Creature, then I mean thus much, *sc.* When Christianity is us'd to answer this, or the other design in Matters intirely Political: Whether it is us'd to promote the Patriarchal or Republican, or any other Scheme of Government: Just as a Mechanick makes use of his Tools to accomplish his end, and when that's done, lays 'em aside, as being no farther serviceable to him.

Now my Task is to prove, that the Gospel was never instituted with that view, and consequently where-ever it is us'd for such a Purpose 'tis vilely prostituted. How this will fall with regard to our Countrey, will be made plain in the Sequel.

I shall use but few Arguments on the first Head, but shall endeavour to make them as conclusive as I can; taking it for granted, my Reader is a Man acquainted with rational Deductions; if otherwise, all Argument is lost upon him.

It appears to me in a Matter of this moment, on which all agree the Salvation of Souls depends, Men ought to lay aside temporal Interest, Passion and Prejudice, and search for Truth with all the Severity of abstracted Reasoning.

I perswade my self every honest Mind, freed from the Prepossessions of Education, will do so. Nor can I tell how to denominate those Men, who are so sordid,  
so



*Christianity no State Creature.*

5

so narrow spirited, as to let a little Gain in this World bias 'em in an Affair of this Importance. It may be said here, that I beg the Question, and indeed considering the common Practice of Mankind both in Church and State, there is too much room for such an Objection. Be that as it will, let us now proceed to the Argument.

I will here take it for granted, that Christianity is of Divine Authority, that we have as much Reason to believe Miracles and Wonders were wrought to prove it so, as we have to believe, that there were such Men as *Homer* and *Virgil* in the World; or that ever such Poems were wrote, as universally pass under their Names.

It appears to me therefore, that this Institution was never design'd by its Author for a State Creature, from the Nature and End of the Thing it self, and also from the Principles on which 'tis founded; lastly, from the Manner of its Promulgation, and the Mission which our Saviour gave his Disciples.

Our Saviour gives us an account of the Nature of this Institution, *sc.* That it has nothing to do with Dominion or Civil Government, no farther than to rectifie exorbitant Passions and Appetites, to restrain People from 'em by the Cords of Reason and Argument, which are said to be, *The cords of a Man.*

The Kings of the *Gentiles* exercise Dominion over them (says our Lord) *but it shall not be so with you*; from whence I infer, that whosoever pretends to Dominion over Peoples Consciences, with regard to Religion, is an Usurper of the Seat of God Almighty, of the Authority of Jesus Christ, and is acting the very counter-part of Christianity.

One can hardly read that Passage of our Saviour's above-mention'd, without being at a loss, how to reconcile it with the late Doctrine of Ecclesiastical Thrones,

Thrones, which a great many of our Clergy have form'd to themselves, and are so fond of. That Dominion was not the design of Christianity, is very plain, neither Civil, nor over the Conscience; the former belonging to the Magistrate, and the latter to God only. Yet our Clergy will not be contented without Thrones and Principalities, they will have Dominion if they can, tho' it be a flat Contradiction to what they tell the World is most sacred, of which they are the only keepers, if we'll take their Word for't.

It is apparent, that the Christian Institution has a compleat Character, *The Wisdom which is from above, is pure and peaceable*, gentle and easie to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruit, without Partiality and without Hypocrisie.

I defie all Mankind to find out, or make good any of these Characters of the Gospel, where there is the least appearance of its being form'd into a State Engine. Nay, in short, 'tis in every particular the very reverse; and therefore, if the Account St. James gives of it be true, 'tis impossible, that ever it could be design'd for such an Instrument; which will appear more plainly, when I come to consider the other Part of the Argument.

The design of the Gospel is to make Men charitable and peaceable, to reform 'em and make 'em fit for Society. If the Arguments of this Institution have so far enraged wicked and self-interested Men, as to cause 'em to oppose it with the Sword, and defend their *Diana* by dint of Arms, the fault is not in Christianity, but in their perverse Tempers.

The purport of this Institution is (as I said) to rectifie the Mind, to conform it to the immitable Perfections of the Deity, in which consists what the New Testament calls Communion with God, and the Happiness of the Soul; on this Account St. James calls this

this Religion pure, which can never be true of it, when form'd into a State Creature.

Moreover, it makes its real Professors gentle, and easie to be intreated, that is, their Ears are open to Argument and good Sense, they are Compassionate, and ready to do Good. But those People who make a State Tool of it, their Ears are open to nothing, but their worldly Honours and Interests; all Argument, how conclusive soever, is lost upon 'em. They are obstinately, and I had almost said wilfully in the wrong, are forc'd to drown their Reason and Understanding in that grand Abiss, the Church.

Of this I have seen several Instances, and every Man must see 'em, who will use his own, and not the Clergy's Eyes. True Christianity is no doubt productive of good Works, of Humanity and Charity, it makes Men good natur'd and considerate; as being all in a fallible and dependent State, it makes the Man God-like, and consequently compleats the Gentleman.

But where 'tis prostituted, we find by daily Experience, the Produce to be Malice, Revenge, Pride, Covetousness; in short, every Vice, that we can imagine makes up the Character of the Devil, and therefore Christianity was never designed for a State Creature.

Once more, 'tis without Partiality, that is, it leaves the natural Right and Privileges of Mankind upon the same Bottom it found 'em. A Servant that was converted to Christianity, whose Master continu'd to be a Heathen, was not thereby freed from his Contract; he could not argue, because he was a Christian, he was therefore free from his Civil Ingagements to his Heathen Master; or ceas'd to be a Roman Slave, because he became a Christian Convert, as the Apostle *Paul* absolutely determines this Matter.

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For if that was to be admitted, all Moral Obligations would cease upon Peoples being Christians, than which nothing could be a greater Damage to Society. But where Christianity is made a State Creature, the Rights and Privileges of Mankind are not upon an equal Foot, and therefore it was never design'd for that Purpose. It teacheth Men to judge of Actions and Things with Candor, and yet as they are in themselves. 'Tis far from the Nature of the Christian Religion, that, because *Bantom* is a Heathen, and *Deodate* a Christian, that *Deodate* shall be favour'd, and *Bantom* have Injustice done him in Matters of Property, or in his Civil Rights.

Yet where the Christian Religion is fram'd into a State Engine, this must be the unavoidable Consequence of it, unless People can be made to see all with one Eye, all think alike, and be of the same Mind, and therefore the Argument concludes, that it was never design'd for such an End.

*Lastly*, 'Tis without Hypocrisie; that is, it will not suffer its true Abettors, to say one Thing and mean another. It admits not of those Tricks and Artifices, that Men of abandon'd Souls frequently practise, and 'tis such as these who believe nothing of the Christian Religion, that are the readiest to make a State Machine of it. And where it is made so, 'tis impossible to be without Hypocrisie, which is the reverse of its Character.

Thus it appears to me from the Nature of the Institution it self, that it was never design'd for a State Engine.

'Tis farther evident to me, that it was never so design'd, from the Principles on which 'tis founded and propagated. The Principles on which 'tis founded and propagated, are those moral Truths resulting from the necessary Connection and Reason of Things; that

### *Christianity no State Creature.*

that are eternally so, immutable and irreversable in their own Nature. If this was not so as I hinted before, Christianity would be so far from being advantageous to Mankind, that it would be the greatest Detriment to 'em. If this was not so, Men might with good Reason turn Deists, if not Atheists.

As 'tis the repeated advice of the Founder of the New Testament, *To do to others, as we would be done by*, so upon this Principle it is, among others, that the Gospel is built, upon this Principle our Saviour commanded his Disciples to propagate it. But where 'tis made a State Creature, it must necessarily break through this Rule, and consequently, it was never design'd for such a Purpose. We cannot but suspect that Religion, whatsoever Face it carries, which teacheth Men to break moral Rules; no wonder, that Men despise such a pretended Revelation, and esteem its Ministers no otherwise than Imps of State. And that making Christianity a State Creature does break through this Rule, is plain, because it founds Dominion in Grace; and what's yet as strange, leaves a partial and fallible Company of People to judge, who is gracious, and who not. But I shall have occasion to reflect upon this Piece of Fanatical Enthusiastick Cant, in the other Part of the Argument.

'Tis upon this, very plain to me, that our Religion was never design'd for a Creature of State.

In the last Place, let any one consider the Mission our Saviour gave his Disciples, and the manner of the Gospel's Promulgation; and he'll easily discover, how impossible it is that ever it could be so design'd.

Our Saviour does not bid 'em take Swords, and the Power of the Civil Magistrate with em, when they went to make Disciples; he does not bid 'em make Converts, by promising places of Dignity and Profit in the Civil Government, these are Arguments fo-



reign to his Purpose; but, says he, *Go teach 'em*, that is, convince 'em by Reason and Argument, that *I am the Christ*, that *the Gospel is true*; and then persuade 'em to observe all Things, that *I have commanded you*. As People cannot be made Christians against their Wills, so all Laws of the Magistrate to force Men to be Christians are in vain, because no Penalty whatsoever, can have any real influence upon the Mind, so as to make a Man believe what he cannot believe; and therefore there is no other way of promoting the Gospel, than by Argument and Reason.

If it be said, That the Civil Power may bestow its Favours on such as are of the true Religion, which would encourage others to be of the same Religion.

I Answer,

That this Objection is not to the Purpose, for it is not the business of the Civil Power to meddle with the Care of Souls, 'tis the Magistrates Trust to take Care of Property, and that every one peaceably and quietly enjoys his Civil Rights. But let us give the Objection a turn, in favour of our State Religion. Men, and what will the Consequence be? Well truly, that whatsoever Religion the Magistrate is of, must be true, and therefore he'll bestow his Favours on such as are of his true Religion; so that a Man, let him be in what Country he will, must, if he would profess the true Religion, take the Magistrates side; which puts me in Mind of a Conversation that happen'd sometime since at *Tunbridge Wells*.

The Question between the Disputants was, Which was the best constituted Church? And after a long debate, they agreed to refer it to a merry old Gentleman then upon the Walks. After he had heard the Question, he gravely determin'd, that to be the best constituted Church, which had the Gallows of her side. And truly, if Christianity be nothing but a  
State



State Creature, I must be of his Opinion.

The Care of a Man's Salvation is upon himself, for neither the Magistrate, nor the Person can answer for him at the great Day of Account. And therefore the Province of the Magistrate, is, as I said before, to manage Government so, as that every Subject shall be protected in the enjoyment of his Properties, Rights and Privileges, whether Civil or Religious. Christianity never did, nor can make any advances or progress in the World, by being made a State Creature; for when once places of Power, Profit and Honour in the Government, are only to be confer'd on those Persons who conform themselves to such a Church; let the Religion be *Jewish*, *Mahometan* or *Christian*, one need not doubt of making Converts apace. So much does the love of this World prevail upon Mankind.

'Tis therefore, (if we believe the New Testament to be of Divine Authority) the most preposterous Thing in the World, to make a State Creature of it. It must argue *Egyptian* Ignorance, to say the best of it, to think, that it can be propagated by such means. It appears from the Nature and Design of it, and the Principles on which it is founded, that it can never be intended for such a Purpose. And therefore I think the Argument is so far clear, and very strong before us.

I go on now to the second Part of it, *sc.* That supposing Christianity is made a State Creature in any Government; my undertaking was to shew, the Reasonableness of its being abolish'd, and that the contrary is not consistent with good Policy.

I hope it will be granted me, that Men may be honest, and yet not think the same way in all the Parts of Religion, and forasmuch as the Salvation of a Man's Soul is his own Care, 'tis reasonable, he should

have the Liberty to act as he believes in his Conscience, will best answer that important End. If this be reasonable, then it is altogether unreasonable to make Christianity a State Creature; and yet 'tis certain, That Government makes it so, where Religion is made a Qualification in a Person, for a Place of Profit, Honour or Trust; That is, such a Place shall not be yours, howsoever otherwise qualified, unless you are of this or the other Church, unless you take the Sacrament with a view to qualifye your self, and pronounce those who have different Sentiments from this Church, *Schismaticks* and *Hereticks*. I can hardly forbear calling this practice a holy Cheat, and treating it with as much Contempt, as I would the Inquisition, it being a Subject, that deserves more Ridicule than Argument. But I must forbear, least I should offend the Reverend *Posse* of my Country, and go on to argue, because they make the forming of Christianity into a State Engine, the Foundation, and Bulwark of what they call the best constituted Church in the World. Whether this be owing to their Folly, or Knavery, or both; I submit to Judgment, tho' 'tis easie to determine to which, if you converse with the Men, or their Works.

1<sup>st</sup>. It ought not to be made a State Creature, if we have any regard to its Authority, to our Saviour and his Laws; to deem a thing sacred, and at the same time prostitute it by the Civil Power, is in my Opinion very preposterous, and in reality, declaring either, that we do not take our selves interested in Religion; and are not concern'd, whether it be true or false, or else, that we believe not one Word of the Matter: If in reality we believe Christianity to be true, how can People answer it to their Consciences, when they use it directly to break through a Moral Precept, *ſc.* *Do to others, as you would be done by?*  
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For that Reason, it ought to be abolish'd as a State Creature. If it be not true, why should the Nation be put to so much Expence about it? Why should it be made the bone of Contention, since that in reality can have no influence, to make one Man a better Subject, or more useful to the Government than another.

What can a Man of Sense believe about it, when he shall see a Priest at the Altar, acting the Holy Part, bowing and cringing, approaching the Bread and Wine, as tho' the *Popish* Notion of Transubstantiation was true, and yet presently distributing these Things to secular Ends and State Contrivances.

The Persons that thus receive it, would not if they could help it (at least most of 'em) but their daily Bread's depending upon it, they are forc'd to do so, but say at the same time, that they hope God Almighty will forgive 'em. Others that have Sense and Argument, must needs conclude the Person with all his Holy Grimaces, believes nothing of the Matter; for certainly, if this Man valued Christianity, he would never use it to these base Purposes.

Therefore whether Christianity be true or not, there is good Reason to abolish its being a State Creature.

2dly. The making Religion a State Tool can answer no good End, either to the Government, or to the Thing it self. I would here appeal to any impartial Man, whether the Test, the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts, ever made one better Subject in *England*, or have been the least useful in any respect to the State. Have those Acts tended to secure the Succession to the Crown of these Realms in the Illustrious House of *Hanover*? Has King *GEORGE* gain'd any more Friends by 'em? Is not the contrary plain to a Demonstration? Were not some of these  
very



very Acts design'd against the *Hanover* Succession? *Frank Stamony* could determine this Question, if he would speak Truth. Were not the Hands of King *GEORGE'S* fast Friends ty'd up by 'em? And for that very Reason, is not he obliged to keep a standing Army? Therefore these Acts by which Christianity is made a State Creature, have been so far from answering good Ends, with regard to this Government under King *GEORGE*, that under their umbrage, and that of the Church, all the treasonable Practices, which have hitherto been found out, have been carried on. And therefore good Policy will subject the Abolition of 'em; but of this more in its place.

Will any Man, who has any value for Christianity, say, People have been made better Christians by these Acts? Have they been reform'd in their Morals by 'em? Or has their Devotion been increas'd, have they thence form'd better Notions of God, Religion and Goodness? Have they from thence learn'd to be good Humour'd, and Charitable, to lead peaceable and quiet Lives in all Godliness and Honesty? Instead of these, daily Experience gives us Instances of the quite contrary Effects. And therefore I conclude, when I hear the Clergy cry up these Acts, as being for the good of the Church, that they mean something by the Church distinct from Christianity, themselves being Judges; they can never think such Laws can be for the real good of the Christian Religion. If our Clergy could but deviate into Honesty, they would certainly declaim against such a Prostitution, and then, and not till then, the thinking and sober Part of Mankind, will have Reason to conclude, that they themselves believe the Christian Religion to be true.

3dly. Ma-

3dly. Making Christianity a State Creature, founds Dominion in Grace, a Notion as Enthusiastick, as it is ridiculous, and therefore it ought to be abolish'd.

On this Account it is, that the *Cromwellian* Administration has been so deservedly lampoon'd, and call'd an Usurpation and Rebellion; but the misfortune is, these very Sons of the Church have fall'n into the same Error, have been presenting this Scene to the World with as much Warmth and Enthusiasm, as any of *Noll's* Saints ever did; for as I said before, the Purport of these Church Acts above-mention'd is, you shall have no place in the Civil Government, all natural Right nevertheless notwithstanding, unless you are of our Church; which is as much as to say in the *Veteran* Cant, unless we deem you gracious. So that the King shall not have a Servant, unless an Ecclesiastick will give him a Certificate that he's a gracious Man; and consequently, the Civil Power must be subjected to the Ecclesiastick, for none can be employ'd without such a Warrant. No wonder our Clergy are so fond of these Church Acts. This I imagine has been the cause of two great Evils. The one is, that if the Prince should presume to chuse his Servants without the Priests leave, or such as they do not like, who are not as they think good Church-Men, or gracious; then they exert their Authority, thunder out the Judgments of God, against those who put the Church in Danger, make dismal Lamentations about the Business of their Religion, that the Church will be swallow'd up by the *Fanatics*, when God knows, the whole of the design is nothing but Self-interest. Hence it is, that they have fir'd the ignorant Mob, spirited 'em into Riots and Rebellion, and perswaded 'em, that to cut their innocent Neighbours Throats is doing God good Service. In short, all the Blood that has been spilt in the late unnatural Rebellion, may be  
very



very justly laid at the Doors of the High-Church Clergy. This is the blessed Fruit of making Christianity a State Creature. For where-ever it is so prostituted, it will always be in the Power of some Set of Clergymen or other, to disturb the Peace of the Government, when they think convenient; or, when their Interest and Pride shall prompt 'em to it.

The other Inconvenience is, it makes the Clergy conceit themselves Kings and Princes, that they have Thrones, and are to exercise Dominion, and that they ought not to be contradicted by any Power on Earth. One can hardly forbear laughing at such Whims or Chimera's, and yet, 'tis scarce possible to forbear expressing some Resentment at the intolerable Insolence of these Ambassadors of Christ (as they call themselves). If the Civil Power divest 'em of their Benefices for Rebellion, and Non-compliance with the Oaths enjoyn'd for the Security of the Government; they call it robbing God's Exchequer, and boldly say, that no Power on Earth can call them to an Account; so that according to this Scheme, God Almighty has given them a Licence to raise Tumults, Rebellions and Riots, and to propagate their Religion, by the Power of Fire and Faggot; that is, to turn High-way Men and Common Robbers, and to knock every Body on the Head, who will not be as bad as themselves, and no Body must call 'em to an Account for it. 'Tis a pretty Thing for a young Fellow, that has been perhaps a Servitor in a College, just come from running of Errands, to be all at once made a spiritual Prince, and above the Magistrate; this Conceit makes the poor young Fellow strut, and look Haughty, contemn the Laity, and treat all Mankind in such an inhuman Way, as none could do but a petulant Priest. And this is another Effect of this blessed Doctrine, *sc.* That Dominion is  
founded



founded in Grace, and of making Religion a State Creature. Besides, if any of these spiritual Princes happen to quarrel with their Neighbours, it may be for nothing, but because they cannot exactly quadrate with their Principles, strait, they have 'em into their Inquisition, in order to teach 'em, how to understand God's true Religion; and thus they have ruin'd many a Person's Fortune (as they say) for the Good of his Soul. This is the most horrid Hypocrisie imaginable, and a down-right giving the Lie to the New Testament: I cannot remember, that our Saviour ever erected a Spiritual *Bridewell*, nor any Sin-office, in which Crimes were to be remitted, or punish'd in Proportion to the Criminals advancing of Cash; nor can I ever find, that our Saviour gave Commission to his Ministers to destroy the Estates and Lives of People, for the Good of their Souls. Yet this is the Case, where Christianity is made a State Engine, and therefore, I think it ought to be abolish'd.

'Tis in vain, for the Clergy to tell the World they are Lovers of real Christianity, whilst with all their might, they plead the Necessity of its being made a State Creature, and by that means make it a Mammon of Unrighteousness, prostituting Religion for Gain, using it (as I said before) to sanctifie the most villanous and trayterous Practices.

Count *Gillinburg* took particular Care in concerting the Ruin of our Country, that the Church might be plac'd in the Front of his Master's Declaration, as well knowing how fond the People are of the Name, tho' in reality of nothing else; and this is the misfortune of making Religion a State Creature.

4thly, Religion made a State Creature must necessarily damage Society. For thereby some Bodies Native Rights and Privileges must be invaded,

some Body must be persecuted and oppress'd; and therefore the State had better abolish it, than make a Tool of it.

Supposing Christianity, in the Circumstances 'tis in with us at present, could be transplanted into a *Heathen* Country, where they have no other Light to guide 'em, but that of Nature, would such a People be any Gainers by it? 'Tis very probable, that their Society would be very much the worse for it. They may have liv'd peaceably and quietly before, but 'tis impossible for 'em to live any longer so, supposing 'em to imbrace Christianity as 'tis generally taught and receiv'd with us.

'Tis a Thing I have sometimes wonder'd at, *sc.* that People can much better bear with one another's different Sentiments in Philosophy, Politicks and Trade, than in Religion. I imagine the Reason of this is, because 'tis made a Creature of State; we see amongst us Men of great worth, for Estates, Learning, Piety, Politeness, every Qualification that can recommend them to the good Graces of Mankind, despis'd, call'd Names, and very often abus'd by the rude Mob, purely because they separate from the establish'd Church, and perhaps for no other Reason, but because that Church is a Creature of State. On the other hand, one may observe a sottish, ignorant, railing, High-Church Priest, ador'd by the same Mob. Now if Christianity was set at Liberty, and freed from the Prostitution above-mention'd, there would be no such Thing as Envy and Hatred among Men, because they may have different Sentiments about it. Every one would endeavour to frame the best Ideas of it to himself that he could, nor would there be any Temptation, for a Man to be of this or the other Denomination, arising from Places of Profit or Honour; Reason and Argument would then



then take Place ; then and not till then, will Christianity be really tolerated in any Government. As it is a State-Creature, it does a great deal of Damage to the Government, as I have shew'd before ; nor can it be otherwise ; for instead of cultivating good Humour, Gentleness and Charity, it establishes ill Nature, Pride and Cenforiousness. And therefore I am of Opinion, that the Government can never be Safe, Flourishing and Easie, till there be no other Distinction amongst us, than such as mean a *Popish Pretender* and Slavery, and such as are for King GEORGE, the *Protestant Succession*, and Universal Liberty. Thus, Sir, I have told you my Opinion freely ; whether I have supported it with sufficient Argument, or not, I submit to Judgment. Thus far I am sure, if the New Testament be true, Christianity stands in need of no such Church-acts as I mention'd before : 'Tis a Scandal to our Clergy, that they are so fond of 'em, and a great Prejudice to the Government, they do not abolish 'em.

'Tis objected by some here, that if universal Liberty was establish'd, it would introduce Licentiousness, and People would be of no Religion at all. This is saying just nothing at all, for have not I already proved, that they had better have no Religion, provided they are subject to the Law of Nature, than to be possess'd with it in the Circumstances it is in with us ? For then they would not be fill'd with Prejudice, Uncharitableness, Pride and Revenge, and by it made unfociable Creatures. This is the Case with the Bigotted Part of Mankind amongst us ; and for the rest, howsoever they may humour the Priests, they believe little or nothing about the Matter, they make the Parsons the common subject of their Banter ; and 'tis just it should be so, whilst their Practice, and their Tongues so much differ, they call it our  
C 2 holy



holy Religion, our holy Mother the Church, and yet constantly prostitute 'em. A Man of Sense cannot reconcile such Contradictions.

I appeal, as above, to every honest and impartial Clergyman, whether he believes in his Conscience those Acts above-mention'd, ever made one Man a better Christian, or gave him a better Opinion of the Gospel in general? It appears to me that such Acts may make Hypocrites, but cannot promote Religion. 'Tis impossible in the Nature of the Thing, that Christianity can be propagated by an Act of Parliament, unless it be by giving a real and universal Toleration, that is, leave it to work its own Way by Dint of Reason and Argument, and those People that are not religious upon Principle and Reason, have no Religion at all: But this an Act of Parliament cannot give a Man, no more than it can give him a Power of thinking. And therefore the Objection against abolishing Christianity, as a State-Creature, because Ungodliness will be thereby promoted, falls to the Ground; and the contrary is evident, that thereby People will be made more religious, and better Christians, and consequently better Neighbours.

As to the Timing of this Matter, *sc.* of giving Christianity a true and real Toleration, I leave it to our wise Legislature. Though one would think they cannot but see, of how dangerous Consequences it is to the Government, to put it into the Power of any Set of Priests, of what Denomination soever, (*when* they please) to disturb the publick Quiet. And one would think it high Time to put an End to, or repeal such Laws, as make it so. The common Objection is, That such proceeding will fire the People, and set them more against the Government. I answer, The High-Church cannot be more enrag'd  
than

than they are, nor can they more richly merit the Gallows than they have done, by their treasonable Practices. 'Tis impossible to bring them into better Temper by the Continuation of these Acts. Can the *Ethiopian* change his Skin? Then may a Tory be a good Subject to King GEORGE. And why must the Nation be at the Expence of a standing Army, purely because the Tories must not be offended, by the Parliament's freeing Christianity from being a State-Creature? I have often wonder'd why the High-Church make such a Noise about Religion, for I never yet met with that High-Church-Man that had any Thing of it, either in Theory or Practice: But what need I wonder, when I consider the Prejudices of Education, and Self-Interest. So that if the Parliament repeal those Acts, howsoever the Tories may complain of the Danger of the Church, they cannot complain of the Danger of their Religion, without giving themselves the Lie, and making themselves the Ridicule of the thinking Part of Mankind (*ex nihilo, nihil fit.*)

Why King GEORGE'S Friends should be debarr'd his Service, at this Time especially, I confess I know not, and I would be glad any Man would give a substantial Reason for it. The Legislature has run all the Length in Clemency with the High-Church it can, without entirely subverting the Constitution, and 'tis a plain Case, unless that be given up also, that Party will never be satisfied; that is, unless the Government will put it into the Power of the Priests to persecute their Neighbours, they'll never be contented.

And is it not worth while for a Government to invest Men of their Character with such Power? Men that are so Dove-like, free from Self-Interest and Malice! Who aim at nothing but the Good of  
Souls!



Souls ! Is it not convenient to make an Inquisition or Star-Chamber, in earnest, of 'em at once ? For this must be done, or the Church will be always in Danger. I would humbly submit the Matter to our Senators, who are Men of Fortune, what would become of their Estates, if these spiritual Princes could exercise that Dominion which they think in Justice is due to 'em ? But how can the Affair be remedied ? is there no Time, no happy Incident which may occasion a Reformation ? To which I may say, If this is not the Time, in my Opinion, there never will be one ; for unless the Legislature will free Christianity from being a State-Engine, it will always be disturb'd by that Set of Priests that are uppermost, be they of what Denomination they will. Let but that Power strike a bold Stroke, once for all, let 'em really tolerate the Christian Religion, *England* will be the Glory of the Christian World, and it will never be in the Power of any Body of Priests to disturb the publick Tranquility more. We have already seen the utmost Efforts of the Tories impotent Malice, even from *Paris* to *Rome*, and from thence to *Sweden* : We have seen 'em joyn in with profest Papists, to support what they call a Protestant Church, *without obtaining so much as a frail Promise for its Support from 'em*, †. And if all these Things are not sufficient to stir up the Legislative Power, to free it self from all Sets of Ecclesiasticks, as such, as to their Influence and Jurisdiction, in Matters of State, I know not what will. Nothing certainly but a ten Years Subjection to their *Jure Divino* Discipline, which will be no better nor no worse, than surrendring our Persons, Wives, Chil-

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† Lord Chancellor's Speech.



dren, Estates, and all that is dear to us, into their pious Management. For no doubt, these spiritual Commissioners, these Embassadors of Christ, can do no Wrong, what they do is all for the Good of the Church; as for them, their Treasure lies not in this World. Yet it happens something very unluckily, that their common Practice is a flat Contradiction to their Words. No Men more covetous than they, none more fond of Power and Dominion, and when they have it, they never fail to let them know it, who are within their Lash.

If our Senators would be pleas'd to reflect upon these Things, they would, I am perswaded, think it the best Piece of Service that ever was done to the Publick, at once to put it out of the Power of any Priests whatsoever, of ever disturbing the Government more. This can be done no other Ways than by setting the Native Rights and Privileges of Mankind upon an equal Foot, freeing Christianity from being a Creature of the State, and establishing universal Liberty.

I hope some of our Senators, now within Doors, will remember their Promises, with respect to this Matter, when Candidates. Some People can very well remember what was then propos'd to 'em, and promis'd by 'em. The present Ministry, when they were in Disgrace in the late Reign, saw the Inconvenience of making Religion a Tool, and promis'd, that if ever it came to be their Turn again, they would make a Reformation. When this Promise has been claim'd more than once, all the Answer was, This is not the Time: But in my humble Opinion, either this is the Time, as I said, or never. I cannot see what the Tories can do more than they have done, in Case those Laws were repeal'd: They cannot be greater Enemies to the Government, nor go faster  
into

into Rebellion than they do, nor would they make Profelytes, by having this Handle given 'em, unless it be amongst the Mob, yet that too would be soon over.

To conclude, 'tis now, I humbly conceive, in the Power of the Legislature, without endangering our Constitution in the least, to put an End to all our Divisions and unnatural Animosities, by doing what I propos'd above. The Parsons may then rail themselves out of Breath, no Body will mind 'em any farther than Argument goes, consequently they'll be tir'd, because their *Billingsgate* Eloquence will answer no End. We shall hear none of 'em call the King's Declaration impious, as a certain Doctor did not many Days ago, and the Law which tolerates the *Protestant Dissenters*, a Cobweb Law, otherwise the Doctor's Fingers itch to be at Fire and Faggot with 'em, or to make Converts of 'em by Dragooning. But if the Legislative Power will now exert itself; these Things may be put an end to, and People would be brought in due time to lead peaceable and quiet Lives under the Government in all Godliness and Honesty; our Senators would by this means record themselves for a Set of the best Patriots that ever sat within the Walls of that House, the present Generation will be under infinite Obligations to 'em, and Posterity venerate their Names and Memories. If otherwise, if Things must remain as they are, if the Priests must have it in their Power, to disturb the Government when they please, our Religion is just like the Church Service for Matrimony, *sc.* beginning with Dearly Beloved, and ending with Amazement.



*FINIS.*

